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Abstract

Woven into the Stuff of Other Men's Lives: The Treatment of the Dead in Iron Age Atlantic Scotland by Fiona Tucker

Keywords: Archaeology, Iron Age, Scotland, Death, Funeral Rites, Domestic Ritual

Atlantic Scotland provides plentiful and often dramatic evidence for settlement during the Iron Age but, like much of Europe, very little is known of the funerary traditions of communities in this region. Formal burial appears to have been rare, and evidence for alternative mortuary treatments is dispersed, varied and, to date, poorly understood. This study sets out to examine for the first time all human remains dating to the Iron Age in Atlantic Scotland, found in a variety of contexts ranging from formal cemeteries to occupied domestic sites.

This data-set, despite its limitations, forms the basis for a new understanding of funerary treatment and daily life in later prehistoric Atlantic Scotland, signifying the development of an extraordinary range of different methods of dealing with, and harnessing the power of, the dead during this period. This information in turn can contribute to wider issues surrounding attitudes to the dead, religious belief, domestic life and the nature of society in Iron Age Europe.